character B thereafter, the 2 key assigned for the B is depressed. At this time the character A is displayed in the column displayed with the cursor consecutive to the A displayed previously on the display section 7, and "A A" is thus displayed. When the 2 key is again depressed, the character B is displayed instead of the A displayed immediately before on the display section 7, and "A B" are thus displayed. For the purpose of retaining the displaying state of the B at this time, the 0 key is depressed. Thus, while the "A B" are being displayed, the cursor is then displayed in the rightward adjacent to the B in the column. In order to input and display the C consecutively, the 2 key assigned for the C is again depressed. The character A is initially displaying in the column displayed with the cursor, and "A B A" are then displayed on the display section 7. When the 2 key is further depressed, the B is displayed instead of the A in the rightmost column, and when the 2 key is again depressed, the B is displayed instead of the C, and "A B C" are displayed on the display section 7. One useful feature of this embodiment is that as long as the next character an operator wishes to enter is on a different key, it is not necessary to press the 0 key before beginning entry of the next character. Accordingly, to input and display the D subsequently, the 3 key assigned for the D may be depressed without previous depression of the 0 key. Thus, the D is displayed in the column thus displayed with the cursor, and "A B C D" are displayed on the display section 7. I order to maintain the displaying state of the D, the 0 key is depressed. Thus, the cursor is displayed in the rightward adjacent to the D in the column, and "A B C D_" are displayed on the display section 7. To then input and display the E, the 3 key assigned for the E is depressed. The D assigned to the leftmost end of the 3 key is initially displayed in the column displayed with the cursor, and "A B C D D" are displayed on the display section 7. Subsequently, when the 3 key is again depressed, the E assigned to the 3 key is displayed instead of the D of the rightmost column, and "A B C D E" are then displayed on the display section 7. The # key of the end key is eventually depressed to display the bland, and this sequence is thus finished.

In the telephone apparatus according to the present invention, the characters previously entered can be displayed by depressing the numeral keys. Therefore, when telephone number of a party; is desired, it is possible to consecutively display the party name and telephone number. For instance, when the numerals 1 and 6 are selected as the abbreviated dial number, "LETTER" key is provided as a special key, "SATO" is assigned as a client name and inputted by the keying operation of the key assigned for the characters, and "0425 83 1111" are selected as the telephone number, "#, , 1, 6, LETTER, S, A, T, O, LETTER, 0, 4, 2, 5, 8, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, # are keyed as the sequence of the key input operation, and are thus stored in the RAM 38. When a plurality of client names are thus stored as intrinsic data in the RAM 38 in this manner, the telephone apparatus can be used as a telephone directory. When any of the clients is desired to read, " , 1, 6" are keyed as the abbreviated dial number, and "S, A, T, O, , 0, 4, 2, 5, 8, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1" are thus displayed on the display section 7. When "LETTER S, A, T, O" are keyed by using the special key and the client name in the keying operation at the reading time, the data is similarly read and displayed.

What we claim is:

1. A telephone apparatus capable of inputting character/symbol data comprising:

telephone network means connected to a handset and terminals connected to a telephone exchange station;

keyboard means having numeral keys each assigned to a plurality of characters/symbols and a mode switching key for switching between a numeral mode and a character/symbol, said keyboard means including a key having a switching instruction function which causes preparation for an additional character/symbol to be displayed with the next depression of one of said numeral keys;

controller means connected to the telephone network means and the keyboard and including memory means for storing keyed in data, said controller means for: (1) setting a desired mode as the mode switching key is operated, (2) selecting for display one of the character/symbols assigned to one of said numeral keys which has been depressed after said mode setting means has been set to the character/symbol mode, (3) changing the character/symbol selected for display in said function (2) to a different character/symbol associated with the same numeral key in response to each repeated depression of the same numeral key previously depressed, (4) selecting for display one of the characters/symbols assigned to another of said numeral keys which has been depressed immediately after said one numeral key, (5) preparing for an additional character/symbol to be displayed with the next depression of one of said numeral keys in response to depression of said switching instruction function key when said additional character/symbol is associated with the same one of said numeral keys as the character/symbol just entered, and (6) holding in said memory means a representation of said character/symbol selected by said functions (2)–(4); and

display means, connected to said controller means, for displaying said character/symbols whose representation is stored in said memory means.

2. A telephone apparatus capable of inputting character/symbol data comprising:

telephone network means connected to a handset and terminals connected to a telephone exchange station;

keyboard means having numeral keys each assigned to a plurality of characters/symbols, and a mode switching key for switching between a numeral mode and a character/symbol mode, said keyboard means including a single key having a switching instruction function which switches, with each depression, a character/symbol being displayed in a character/symbol mode to a different character/-symbol associated with the same numeral key; and

controller means connected to the telephone network means and the keyboard, said controller means for: (1) setting a desired mode as the mode switching key is operated, (2) selecting for entry one of the characters/symbols assigned to one of said numeral keys which has been depressed after the mode setting means has been set to the character/symbol mode, and (3) changing the character/symbol selected for entry in said function (2) to a different character/symbol associated with the same numeral key in response to each repeated depression of said single switching instruction function key.